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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 RANGOON 001362

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [CM](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: EAP/BCLTV DIRECTOR'S MEETING WITH CHINA'S
AMBASSADOR TO BURMA

REF: A. RANGOON 1029

[1](#)B. RANGOON 1031

Classified By: COM Carmen Martinez for reasons 1.5 (B/D).

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Chinese Ambassador to Burma Li Jinjun posited in a late October meeting that current efforts by the international community on Burma should be aimed at establishing a platform for stable cooperation between Aung San Suu Kyi (ASSK) and the SPDC. The U.S. should consider lifting economic sanctions, at least partially, and work with China to identify concrete areas for cooperation between ASSK and the SPDC. ASSK should seek to de-emphasize her role as leader of the Burmese democratic and human rights movement and take steps to portray herself as a statesperson willing to grapple with economic development issues. The May 30th attack on Aung San Suu Kyi and her supporters was an almost inevitable outcome of a poorly managed process after ASSK's release in 2002 from house arrest. It is only a matter of time before ASSK is released from her current detention, although the SPDC will not take any action that could be perceived as being the result of outside pressure, the Chinese Ambassador concluded. End Summary.

What a difference a year makes

[1](#)2. (C) In an October 22 meeting with Chinese Ambassador Li Jinjun, EAP/BCLTV Director Judith Strotz noted that the situation in Burma had changed significantly and for the worse since her meeting with Ambassador Li the year before; that the result had negative implications not only for stability within Burma but for the region as a whole; and that the U.S. remained concerned about indications that Burma was seeking to obtain a nuclear reactor from Russia and weapons from North Korea.

[1](#)3. (C) Ambassador Li stated that the international community sometimes had the view that China was happy with the SPDC; this was not the case. He continued that he had not been surprised by the May 30th attack on National League for Democracy (NLD) leader Aung San Suu Kyi (ASSK), commenting that the initial response to ASSK's release from house arrest in May 2002 from all parties, including the international community, had been overly optimistic and ignored that ASSK and the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) were only in the initial stages of confidence-building. In addition, ASSK had insufficient opportunities to engage in dialogue with the SPDC, a problem that was compounded by the failure of ASSK, the SPDC, and the international community to formulate a concrete plan of action. As a result, ASSK's increased freedom, the activities she and the NLD pursued, and the SPDC's response to them, rather than building confidence, created doubt and disappointment on both sides.

[1](#)4. (C) Continued and increased pressure by the United States, Japan, the European Union (EU), and ASEAN for ASSK's immediate release will be counterproductive as the SPDC will not take any action that could be perceived as being the result of outside pressure, Ambassador Li said. In addition, by focusing only on ASSK's release, the international community runs the risk of creating a situation that will lead to a repeat of the May 30th attack. ASSK's release should not be a precondition for lifting sanctions or returning to dialogue, argued Ambassador Li. Rather ASSK, the SPDC, and the international community should aim at establishing a stable platform of cooperation between ASSK and the SPDC, an approach that UN Special Envoy Razali supports. Thus, the United States, the United Kingdom, and other EU countries that support ASSK must not ignore recent steps taken by the SPDC, including the assignment of General Khin Nyunt as Prime Minister and the recently announced road map. Criticism will only shut down prospects for progress, Ambassador Li stated. A better option is the tack being taken by ASEAN, which provides Burma with space to come up with its own solution.

ASSK: Democracy Fighter or Stateswoman?

[1](#)5. (C) According to Li, now that the SPDC has announced the

road map, the ball is in ASSK's court. Her apparent lack of response to the road map--which Ambassador Li said it is in her best interest to support--gives the impression that the SPDC has the upper hand. It is positive, however, that ASSK has said that she is pleased with Khin Nyunt's selection as Prime Minister, Ambassador Li noted. ASSK should be wary of sticking too tightly to her principles, as should the SPDC, if there is to be progress. ASSK should de-emphasize her role as leader of the Burmese democratic and human rights movement and take steps to portray herself as a statesperson willing to grapple with economic development issues. He suggested that ASSK could join the SPDC on a commission to review international aid projects. In response to Strotz's comment that the SPDC had turned down this suggestion from Razali, the Ambassador said that initially Razali saw his mandate as promoting political reform; however, he now believed that work also needed to be done on economic issues, implying that a future suggestion might have a more positive response. SPDC Chairman Senior General Than Shwe regards ASSK as a member of the military family, but a rebellious one who has been influenced negatively by external influences, according to Ambassador Li. Strotz noted that a number of military family members had met unhappy ends, including former leaders Tin Oo and Ne Win.

6 (C) Although China has continued to adhere to its policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of sovereign countries post-May 30th, China has approached the SPDC on issues such as economic growth, social stability, and the welfare of the Burmese people in an effort to help the SPDC deal with those issues more effectively. While China can't claim to have a great deal of influence with the SPDC, these measures have had some impact, Ambassador Li assessed. It is not enough to persuade the SPDC, however. The U.S. might want to use its influence to persuade ASSK to take some kind of action, Ambassador Li suggested.

Have you met with Aung San Suu Kyi?

17. (C) Strotz commented that there are areas of commonality in the U.S. and Chinese understanding of Burma. She agreed that the U.S. and the international community need to look beyond ASSK's release in order to avoid a repeat of the events of the past year. Strotz also noted that the U.S. deliberately had not criticized the road map, suggesting only that it should include ASSK, the NLD, and the ethnics groups and that it would be useful to have some sort of timeline.

18. (C) Strotz added that the U.S. had a more positive view of ASSK's role. The release of ASSK was a priority. The USG could not engage ASSK if we continued to be denied access to her. ASSK needed information from multiple sources in order to be able to respond to the current situation. Since this information was being withheld from her, ASSK likely did not have sufficient data to assess the current situation. Responding to Director Strotz's question concerning whether Ambassador Li would consider meeting ASSK, Ambassador Li acknowledged that ASSK was an important person and that the NLD was an important political force in Burma. However, it would not be prudent for him to meet with ASSK at this time, as doing so would have a negative impact on his ability to meet with the "top three" senior SPDC officials, said Ambassador Li. He added that they share their "inner thoughts" with him.

Support the Road Map

19. (C) Ambassador Li indicated he was pleased to learn that the U.S. has not publicly criticized the road map, although U.S. comments on the need for a timeline and inclusion of the NLD were not necessarily helpful. Urging more public U.S. support of the road map, Ambassador Li suggested that perhaps the U.S. could go further and show a positive response, partially lifting sanctions. Then, the SPDC will resume confidence-building initiatives with ASSK, although not necessarily dialogue, as both sides still are skeptical of one another, offered Ambassador Li. The SPDC and ASSK must engage in concrete, substantive cooperation in specific fields to establish a firm foundation for further dialogue. China and the U.S. should work to foster cooperation between the SPDC and ASSK. China is doing what it should and hopes that the U.S. will as well, Ambassador Li said in closing.

110. (SBU) Strotz noted that the U.S. believed the SPDC responded positively to pressure but, when it felt it had leeway, it took negative actions. The sanctions conveyed a clear message to the SPDC and we hoped that they would help bring about positive change.

Comment: Chicken or Egg?

110. (C) Ambassador Li's approach this time was quite different from that of a year ago. He continued to urge

engagement with the regime and argue against exerting pressure on Burmese leaders. However, he was much clearer on China's displeasure with the SPDC and on the steps China had taken to influence the situation, while continuing to mouth support for non-interference in internal affairs. Also, he was much more forthright on the need for ASSK to play a role in the future of Burma. End Comment.

11. (U) This cable was cleared by EAP/BCLTV Director Judith Strotz.
McMullen